



Open Platform Observations

by Steve Wagner

CCCCXXI: "Lazy, Hazy Days of Summer" – This month's subtitle ...

... is the "catch" of a song popularized by Nat King Cole a few decades back. Given my dislike of truly hot weather, I do not share the sentiment expressed in one of its other lines: "I wish that summer could always be here".

Our July issue

Some readers may not have realized that the Anthracite Coal Strike Commission, whose proceedings **S. Robert Powell, Ph.D.**, reported in his column, was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt in response to the refusal of the managers of the hard coal mining companies to negotiate with their workers. "TR" had been infuriated by the attitude exemplified in the widely reported statement by George Baer, a lawyer who was also head of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, which like the D&H and other anthracite-hauling lines also still owned mines. Baer had said, "The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected and cared for, not by the labor agitators, but by the Christian men of property to whom God has given control of the property rights of the country, and upon the successful management of which so much depends". In his closing statement for management to the Anthracite Coal Commission, of which he was a member, he said of the mine workers, "These men don't suffer. Why, hell, half of them don't even speak English".

Theodore Roosevelt grew up in a wealthy New York City family, and was a Republican until 1912, when he tried to return to the U.S. Presidency as nominee of the Progressive – known as the "Bull Moose" – Party. However, while serving in the New York State Legislature and as police commissioner for New York City, he learned how poor people actually lived

Timothy Mellon

The lead paragraph of a long article in the July 29 New York Times by Alexandra Berzon and Mike McIntire, was "Timothy Mellon, a wealthy banking heir and railroad magnate, has reached the stratosphere of American influence as the top supporter of Donald J. Trump, doling out millions to support them. This year he has given \$75 million to support ex-President Trump's campaign and \$25 million to Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s independent campaign for the presidency; he is the largest individual benefactor of both."

As a young adult, he was politically liberal in the modern U.S. sense of the term. For instance, he made a campaign contribution to U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy. However, he became increasingly critical of the U.S. government and various causes in the 1980s, though he did not begin to make large scale political contributions until 2010. He has financially helped many candidates he had not met before doing so. He has been involved in many court cases, rarely speaks with journalists, and declined to be interviewed for the article.

The article reflects the hostility of the management of prominent newspapers toward Trump and his followers. The article details the poor environmental record, financial shenanigans and labor disputes of the Guilford Rail System and Pan Am Railways, with which most D&H fans likely are familiar. It also discusses Andrew Mellon, Timothy's grandfather, who had grown wealthy as an industrialist based in Pittsburgh (running major enterprises including Gulf Oil), who died before Tim-

Central, mayor of Buffalo, and New York's governor, used troops to quash the Pullman strike in the 1890s. The first TR was the first U.S. president to intervene in a labor dispute on the side of the workers.

the rich, favored high tariffs, and opposed stricter government regulation of the stock markets. Many economists regard those policies as having been major causes of the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression. The article notes that Andrew Mellon resigned when facing impeachment for corruption, but does not mention that his donations of great works of art became the basis of the Smithsonian Institution's National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

Good news about a stationmaster

An article in the July 3 Boston Globe stated, "At 83, she still keeps things running on schedule: In Castleton, VT, Mary-Ann Jakubowski operates the ... station, serving Amtrak and her community". She has lived in the town most of her life. Her parents bought the depot in the 1960s and ran a music shop there selling organs and pianos. Her father, Cecil Ducharme, modified some of the instruments to play in honky-tonk style. For 20 years, students from the nearby university would come by in the afternoon to get their instruments fixed and to jam with her father, who played violin and saxophone.

After her parents and brother died, Ms. Ducharme and her husband inherited the building. They restored and proposed to Amtrak that its *Ethan Allen Express* stop there; it has done so since 2010. During the Covid-19 pandemic, what had been the sales room for organs and pianos was turned into an apartment. Ms. Ducharme worked as an EMT for 16 years; she continues to lead "Bone Builders" workout classes twice a week at the local community center.

Rail labor groups for nationalization

On July 1, trains.com reported that a 98-page report, "Putting America Back on Track: The Case for a 21st Century Public Rail System, arguing for public ownership of Class 1 freight railroads in the U.S., had been published, "funded by Railroad Workers United, through the Railroad Workers Education & Legal Defense Foundation, as well as the John L. Hammond Fund". I had never heard of those outfits, but the report itself looks well worth studying as an attempt to stir serious consideration of its subject. It basically argues that for economic and environmental reasons the

S. Robert Powell mentioned in Steve Wagner's column